



To: Principals, Deans, Academic Directors and Chairs
Copy: CAOs
HR Managers & Directors
From: Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-President, Human Resources & Equity
Heather Boon, Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life
Date: June 1, 2020
Re: Considering the Impact on Faculty and Librarians of Caregiving
Responsibilities During COVID-19

Please distribute widely.

Note to Chairs: *Please remind faculty members who manage staff that they need to be aware of, and manage, these issues as they arise with their staff members. Please see [this message](#) distributed to staff for more information.*

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, we are writing concerning the challenges that many faculty members and librarians are facing when balancing caregiving (whether for children, elderly parents, or others) and home-schooling responsibilities while also working from home.

As Deans, Chairs, and Directors are very aware, these are very stressful times for all faculty and librarians. The specific challenges that each of us faces in the current environment vary widely, depending on our individual circumstances. We know that academic administrators and supervisors are particularly aware of the impact that caregiving responsibilities can have on a faculty member or librarian's ability to engage in their usual work-related activities.

As you work to implement strategies to best support your colleagues, we thought it might be helpful to share some of the ideas and best practices that have emerged at our Academic HR table.

These include:

- creating an environment in which colleagues feel comfortable talking about the challenges they are facing so that they can be supported
- exercising as much sensitivity / flexibility as possible when scheduling meetings or workshops, including avoiding lunch hours (when many caregivers may be busy),



polling potential participants to get a better understanding of constraints, and/or varying the timeslots for regular workshops or seminars to accommodate diverse schedules

- encouraging colleagues to report the impact that caregiving responsibilities may have had on their teaching and research in their activity reports for the purposes of PTR assessment and in their teaching and research statements for the purposes of academic review processes
- adopting creative approaches to the distribution of workload to allow colleagues to accommodate their caregiving responsibilities including alternative scheduling/timing of teaching and service assignments
- extending deadlines for the use of start-up funds, applications to internal funding competitions, and nominations for internal awards
- reminding early career faculty and librarians about the possibility of requesting delays to tenure, continuing status, and permanent status reviews where the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on their academic progress

In considering possible responses and actions, we encourage you to bear in mind that the emphasis should be on treating colleagues equitably, but that this may not mean treating all faculty and librarians exactly the same. These supportive and creative responses are an important part of meeting our obligations as an employer to accommodate family status under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please reach out to our offices, or to your Dean's office in the case of a multi-department Faculty, if you have questions or need advice on these matters. A reminder that confidential support is also available to you and your colleagues through the University's Employee and Family Assistance Program, which is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1.800.663.1142.

Thank you for all that you have done, and continue to do, to respond to the current challenges.